



## MEETING NOTES – Merced GSP

SUBJECT: Merced GSP Coordinating Committee Meeting

DATE/TIME: January 28, 2019 at 1:30 PM

LOCATION: Castle Conference Center at Castle Airport, 1900 Airdrome Entry, Atwater, CA 95301

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### Coordinating Committee Members In Attendance:

	Representative	GSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stephanie Dietz	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Justin Vinson	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Daniel Chavez	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ken Elwin (alternate)*	Merced Irrigation-Urban GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bob Kelley	Merced Subbasin GSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nic Marchini	Merced Subbasin GSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rodrigo Espinoza	Merced Subbasin GSA
<input type="checkbox"/>	George Park (alternate)	Merced Subbasin GSA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Larry Harris	Turner Island Water District GSA #1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Scott Skinner (alternate)	Turner Island Water District GSA #1
	*Leah Brown attended for Ken Elwin	

### Meeting Notes

1. Call to order
  - a. Alyson Watson called the meeting to order and gave a brief overview of agenda items and content.
2. Approval of minutes for December 17, 2018 meeting
  - a. Meeting minutes were approved.
3. Stakeholder Committee update
  - a. Update from January 28 morning meeting
  - b. SC meeting had good turnout with many different viewpoints. Big questions arose when discussing appropriative use and selection of historical period to use as baseline for allocation, and how to address overlying users not currently pumping. Comments ranged from 0% allocation for unirrigated lands to a partial allocation of either a 25 or a 50%. Several SC members stated there should be a process to address these lands in the future, especially if they start at a 0% allocation.
4. Flood-Managed Aquifer Recharge (Flood-MAR)
  - a. Hicham EITal (MID) provided an explanation of Flood-MAR activities in Merced Subbasin and why this is important for Merced. Benefits were identified.
  - b. Hicham (MID) explained what must align to have a good Flood-MAR system including hydrology, land availability, recharge potential, and water rights.



- c. Current plans and activities include work MID is conducting with DWR. This involves using the MID watershed model to look at precipitation, snowpack and snowmelt.
  - d. Hicham provided a map of soils where the land has high recharge potential. MID works with DWR on the GRAT (Groundwater Recharge Assessment Tool) which helps determine where recharge is best done, when, how much surface water can be captured, costs, and how much groundwater overdraft can be addressed through this recharge.
  - e. Hicham explained a good Flood-MAR system must consider water rights with knowledge of water sources and favorable land options. It also must make use of storms. The SWRCB allows taking water in Dec., Jan., and Feb., and only when capacity of the creek is at least 90% of flow that day. There are around 5 storms per year in California that we can try to use.
  - f. MID is trying to get funding from FEMA for a project on the Grand Canal that goes all the way down to Le Grand.
  - g. Question: What is the cost of the project? Answer from Hicham: Estimate is between \$600,000-\$700,000.
  - h. Hicham explained the configuration of custom analysis that relies on several models including some for irrigation systems, groundwater, upstream watershed, Merced River, etc.
  - i. MID will engage more with the Merced Streams group, especially in looking for funding.
  - j. It will be best for the GSAs to determine who is going to take the water when a storm comes.
  - k. Question: Does the GRAT assess the suitability of areas for recharge? Hicham: Yes. This helps determine what areas are best for recharge and compare areas to help GSAs determine where to prioritize recharge areas.
  - l. Comment: It would be good for individual landowners to follow this closely. Hicham: The landowners will have to look at it and decide for themselves if this works for them also economically. Yes, they should pay attention closely as information becomes available.
  - m. Question: It doesn't have to be on a crop area? Hicham: Correct, it can also be a fallowed area, or an area that does not have crops.
  - n. Question: During the winter times, could water be diverted to Livingston? Hicham: Yes, with some conveyance projects that could be put in place, water could be taken year-round.
  - o. Question: If there are farmers that have surface water and are in an area for recharge, could they apply? Hicham: Yes, you can buy the water (e.g. Livingston) even if you don't have a water right.
  - p. Question: Does the flooding affect the NPDES permitting? Hicham: The Irrigated lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) needs to be followed.
5. Temporary and long-term State Water Resources Control Board Permits for Flood Water
- a. Hicham EITal introduced discussion and recommended the Merced Subbasin submit one long term permit to the SWRCB. One, collective permit assists more efficient flood flow decisions during a storm.
  - b. Question: How would you figure out the fees? Don't they do this on a per acre basis? Hicham: This depends on how much water you want to pay for. You pay one fee for the water you take.
  - c. Question & clarification: Hicham asked during the meeting for a single permit for all diversions in the subbasin. These do not have to be for a project that is already existing.
  - d. Comment: One public audience member thinks this is a great idea.
  - e. Comment: Committee member recommended GSA legal counsels investigate this and give advice.



- f. Reply from Hicham: The SWRCB would rather have one permanent permit.
  - g. Clarification: Hicham states based on his past experience with discussions in Southern California recharge will never be considered for beneficial use.
  - h. Comment: Suggestion made permanent permit it preferred because it is harder to take this away as opposed to the temporary permit.
  - i. General consensus: Would like to bring this to the three GSAs and seek legal counsel and research.
  - j. Decision: GSAs to get legal counsel on board.
  - k. Question: What is the timeline for this permit? Hicham: Likely in 2020.
6. Presentation by Woodard & Curran on GSP development
- a. Next Steps in GSP Development
    - i. Alyson Watson (Woodard & Curran) reviewed the decision-making timeline and focus of today. The main goal is to agree upon a recommendation for an allocation framework to determine allocation at the GSA level. A preliminary direction for the allocation framework is needed to meet the 2020 deadline. Additional information will refine modeling and allocations prior to implementation. Monitoring and reporting should be the focus for 2020-2025. This timeframe requires outreach on a broad level. There are five-year updates for the plan.
    - ii. Hicham (MID) input: Thinks it makes sense not much is complete prior to 2025, but if we wait until 2030 some areas may be racing to hit their undesirable results thresholds. The Subbasin will have monitoring wells and will want to avoid hitting thresholds.
    - iii. Comment: It is possible to can wait until 2030, but another 3-year drought occurs so do risks for undesirable results. Response from Alyson (W&C): Once framework is in place, we can determine specific actions be taken once certain thresholds reached. Focus is to determine an approach and use this to determine if there are areas that will have undesirable results.
    - iv. Question: What is the guidance on timing for subsidence zones? Answer (W&C): There is no specific guidance in getting to 2015 conditions. Subsidence is what we will look at once we have a framework agreed upon.
  - b. Water Allocation Framework
    - i. Alyson Watson (W&C) presented the follow ups from the last meeting and the updated allocation framework development. She reviewed steps in determining the allocation methodology which include: determining sustainable yield, subtracting seepage and developed supply, and then allocating the sustainable native yield to overlying and appropriative users.
    - ii. W&C did analyses to look at different historical averaging periods including spans of 20, 10, 15, and 5 years (and a 5, 10, and 15 year that exclude drought). Drought increases overlying users' usage.
    - iii. The SC recommended using the 10-year period with the drought (2006-2015). There was a question of whether a 40-year period would be feasible. However, there is not adequate data to use 2040.
    - iv. Question from Alyson (W&C): How does the CC feel about 10-year period? Answer from CC members: This time period is appropriate.



- v. In addressing unirrigated lands at a minimum there should be a process outlined for how to bring in folks who have unirrigated lands into the allocation framework.
  - vi. Alyson (W&C) provided illustration for partial allocation estimations given to unirrigated lands. These were set up and estimated for 100%, 50%, or 25% or no allocation.
  - vii. There is a substantially higher number of unirrigated lands in Merced Subbasin GSA than the other GSAs. This can influence the total allocation to the GSAs depending on what partial allocation is given to unirrigated lands.
  - viii. Comments relayed from the SC meeting:
    - 1. 1.25 AF/A is difficult to have even for operating a dairy.
    - 2. However, folks who have pasture lands/unirrigated lands would like to be a part of the conversation.
  - ix. Comment: There is concern that the GSAs might not be aware of potential legal actions moving forward.
  - x. Question: Could we provide an example of what types of allocations would look like for the dry and wet years? Alyson (W&C): This is possible. We want to make sure that we are first getting a clear understanding and ensure the SC and CC have a clear understanding of the average year.
  - xi. General request: Concern about understanding the allocation framework expressed. W&C will set up separate calls to review and answer questions of content presented.
  - xii. Question: What about the seepage estimates, where do the numbers for this come from? Alyson (W&C): Seepage numbers come from estimates from MID and Stevinson Water District. W&C is still getting other information from other water conveyors.
  - xiii. Alyson explained the goal is to have a 2020 GSP that can be approved and is based on the information that we have, which is going to be updated and addresses data needs.
  - xiv. Question: What is the net loss flow to the Chowchilla? Dominick (W&C): The net value of loss is about 10,000 AF.
  - xv. Clarification: Numbers presented are to give an estimate based of the best data we have available with the knowledge that the numbers will change. What is presented is a proportional reduction.
  - xvi. Comment: What will be important is to consider the GSP as a living plan, so that as additional data come in and as questions are answered, these are integrated.
  - xvii. Comment from Hicham: Hicham asked MIDAC for an opinion, and MIDAC (growers) said they would like to go for a 0% allocation of unirrigated lands.
  - xviii. Alyson (W&C): With regard to legal challenges, we are not affecting GW rights. If someone wants to pump, we can avert some of this with a challenge process.
  - xix. W&C will schedule individual meetings with each GSA to discuss further and revisit this next month at CC meeting.
- c. Data Management System
- i. Reminder that beta link for DMS has been created and sent out to the committees.
- d. Other Updates

- i. Projects are being reviewed. There are currently 40 in the draft list as of this meeting. These will be reviewed in more detail in the next meeting.

7. Public Outreach update

- a. Flyer for February public workshop was posted and sent out to committees.

8. Coordination with neighboring basins

9. Public comment

- a. None

10. Next steps and adjourn

- a. Water Budget TM – revise TM based on input from GSA staff
- b. Assessing projects and management actions



**Next Regular Meeting**

**March 25, 2018 at 1:30 p.m.**

Merced, CA – Castle Conference Center at Castle Airport (subject to change)

Information also available online at [mercedsgma.org](http://mercedsgma.org)

**Action may be taken on any item**

*Note: If you need disability-related modification or accommodation in order to participate in this meeting, please contact Merced County, Community and Economic Development staff at 209-385-7654 at least 48 hours prior to the start of the meeting.*